



10 Myths of Social Justice

By Vernon Wall

Myth #1 Social Justice is a "vague" concept with no real scholarly basis.

Another thought: There is much scholarship and research around the concepts of social justice. In their text "Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice", Bell, Adams & Griffin (2007) define social justice as a process and a goal. "The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society that is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure." (p. 1)

Myth #2 Social Justice is just "diversity" and "multiculturalism" renamed.

Another thought: The concepts of social justice move beyond awareness and tolerance toward appreciation and action. They allow us to move beyond conversations about the "other" and focus on how our identities are windows into understanding oppression and creating change.

Myth #3 Talking about social justice moves us away from conversations on racism, sexism, classism, etc.

Another thought: Social Justice concepts allow us to enter into conversations related to all of the "isms" in more effective ways - using the dominant and subordinated groups that make up who we are.

Myth #4 Student affairs professionals are "good people" and thereby the concepts of social justice are in their nature.

Another thought: Even "good people" with "good hearts" can do some very oppressive things in unintentional ways.

Myth #5 Social Justice does not welcome "conservative" voices and views.

Another thought: The "end outcome" of social justice is equity and inclusion. There are many ways in which we can achieve this and we might not always agree on the means by which to get there.

Myth #6 The concepts of spirituality and social justice are not compatible.

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Another thought: Most if not all faith communities embrace the concepts of fairness, love, compassion and justice. Looks like a pretty good fit to me.

Myth #7 Social Justice focuses on "action" rather than "personal work".

Another thought: Social Justice begins with personal work. It is through our understanding of ourselves that we can then engage in authentic dialogue with others and better strategize with others to enact change.

Myth #8 Students who have studied abroad are more aware of social justice issues.

Another thought: Yes, if they know and understand the dynamics of oppression and injustice in the United States before heading to another country. If not, they are just tourists on different soil.

Myth #9 Students aren't interested in social justice issues.

Another thought: The annual UCLA study on first year students begs to differ. Over the last three years, there has been a constant increase in students reporting interest in civic commitment and social responsibility.

Myth # 10 Social Justice is a "liberal" cause for idealists.

Another thought: Call it what you want, social justice is about making sure that everyone in the campus community feels connected and supported. This allows them to achieve at their greatest potential. This is what the college experience is about.

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